# Lord Dunmore and the West: A Re-evaluation

**By Richard Orr Curry**

*Great Dunmore our General valiant & Bold*
*Excels the Great Heroes—the Heroes of Old;*
*When he doth command we will always obey,*
*When he bids us fight we will not run away.*[1]

Theodore Roosevelt, in his history, *The Winning of the West,* was the first historian to call attention to the importance of Dunmore's War in the history of westward expansion. Not only did the battle of Point Pleasant break the power of the Shawnee Indians in the Ohio Valley, but opened up Kentucky, the "dark and bloody ground," to settlement. Even more significant, this expedition commanded by John Murray, the last Royal Governor of Virginia, was to have an indirect bearing on the terms of the Peace of Paris, 1783. Without Kentucky as a base of operations, it is doubtful that George Rogers Clark could have led his band of "western" Virginians against Kaskaskia and Vincennes in the Illinois country. Had this daring mission failed, the western border of the United States well could have been established at the crest of the Alleghanies rather than at the banks of the Mississippi.[2] Furthermore, this campaign—conceived, planned and executed under the direction of Lord Dunmore—broke the savages' power so completely that the frontier was quiet for nearly two years after the American Revolution broke out at Lexington and Concord in the spring of 1775.

Lyman Copeland Draper characterized the war against Shawnee as the most popular event in Dunmore's whole administration.[3] And indeed, Virginians did have ample reason for rejoicing. In retrospect, some historians tend to emphasize the significance of Dunmore's War solely in the broad framework of national development. Yet a large number of Virginians had more immediate, more personal reasons for cele-

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[1] "The Journal of James Newell Across the Ohio," in Reuben G. Thwaites and Louise P. Kellogg, eds., *Documentary History of Dunmore's War* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1905), 361.

[2] Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (4 vols., New York, 1889-1896), II, 301-302.

[3] Thwaites and Kellogg, *Dunmore's War*, 435. For the story of Dr. Draper's life see William B. Hesseltine, *Pioneer's Mission; the Story of Lyman Copeland Draper* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1954).

brating Lewis' victory over Cornstalk. Now that the Indian menace was removed, it was possible for settlers to violate the Proclamation of 1763 in relative safety, and for speculators to have existing claims surveyed. "Land hunger" can scarcely be overemphasized when explaining the grievances of Virginians against George III. As the cultivation of tobacco was the mainstay in the economic life of the colony, the planter aristocracy turned to land speculation as a means of extricating themselves from an overwhelming burden of indebtedness to British merchants. The tobacco trade in the 1760's was at best a precarious occupation. If speculation in western lands was to be denied by royal fiat, how then was the landed gentry to continue to support itself in the manner to which it had become accustomed?

Even though the Royal Proclamation of 1763 originally had been intended as a temporary measure until a more comprehensive western land policy could be worked out, Virginians were none too happy to await the king's pleasure before securing new grants or having existing claims opened to settlement. A temporary proclamation line beyond which no settlement was allowed was distasteful enough; but when it became apparent that no satisfactory, long range policy was forthcoming, it is a massive understatement merely to say that Virginians were restless and dissatisfied.

Even more ominous from the Virginians' point of view was the possibility that when the West was opened for development, exploitation would be undertaken by English land companies rather than by Virginia interests. Such an eventuality conflicted with James Mason's visions of a Virginian empire in the West.[4] Then too, for example, the Lees of Virginia had organized the Mississippi Land Company. Dr. Arthur Lee was sent to London as its principal agent.[5] And eventually, Thomas Jefferson went so far as to deny the right of any control whatsoever over western lands to the imperial authorities.[6]

In 1769 a petition was made to the British Crown by an

[4] Kate M. Rowland, *The Life of George Mason* (2 vols., New York, 1892), I, 153-158.

[5] Clarence W. Alvord, *The Mississippi Valley in British Politics* (2 vols., Cleveland, 1917), II, 93, 123.

[6] Thomas Jefferson, "A Summary View of the Rights of British America," in P. L. Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (10 vols., New York, 1892), I, 444.

English company, headed by Thomas Walpole, requesting the right to purchase and colonize a large tract of land which had been ceded by the Iroquois at Fort Stanwix. The Privy Council actually authorized the grant in 1773. Only because of the growing unrest in the American colonies did the project fail to meet final approval. The proposed new colony was to be known as Vandalia, and its seat of government was to be located at the mouth of the Great Kanawha.[7] From a Virginian's viewpoint, Great Britain, in considering the transmontane region as imperial domain, had ignored the charter rights of his colony with impunity. Though Virginia never officially contradicted the imperial assumption of sovereignty, she was determined not to abandon her claims to western lands without a struggle.

In Lord Dunmore, Virginia land speculators found a willing ally. Dunmore, who had come to the American colonies to increase his own personal fortune, had no serious objections to the occupation of the transmontane region, despite the policy of the imperial government. Dunmore had visions of acquiring western estates of his own and found many congenial associates and advisors among the land speculators of Virginia—including George Washington and Andrew Lewis. He became Governor of Virginia in 1771 and as early as April, 1772, the earl expressed his interest in acquiring a tract of land which had been secured at the Treaty of Lochaber in 1770. "Lord Dunmore," wrote a contemporary, "and several gentlemen of that country determined upon petitioning the king for some part of it."[8] In November of the following year Dunmore petitioned the Board of Trade for a personal grant of 100,000 acres. Unfortunately for the earl, his request was rejected.[9]

The last Royal Governor of Virginia not only pushed his own interests vigorously but upheld the "rights" of the colony which he administered. In the controversy with Pennsylvania over the location of its western boundary, Dunmore aggressively supported Virginia's claim to the region around Fort Pitt. When Governor Penn sent a committee to Williamsburg to seek a compromise solution, Dunmore refused to make even the

[7] Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution* (New York, 1937), 41-58.
[8] Captain Andrew Hammond to H. Stanley, December 6, 1772; quoted in Alvord, *Mississippi Valley*, II, 182n.
[9] Abernethy, *Western Lands*, 114.

slightest concession.[10] The dispute was not finally settled until after the Revolution, but Dunmore had been so outspoken in promoting the claims of his colony that when he ordered the expedition against the Shawnee, it was rumored in Virginia that Dunmore was going to fight the Pennsylvanians.[11]

John Murray was sympathetic to the aspirations of Virginians in other ways. For example, the Proclamation of 1763 had made provision for granting tracts of land to British officers and soldiers which could be located west of the proclamation line. There was considerable doubt as to whether Virginians (colonials) were included under the terms of this act. Yet, on December 15, 1773, Dunmore announced that colonials "should be at liberty to locate the lands, they claimed under the Royal Proclamation of . . . 1763, WHEREVER they should desire; and that every officer should be allowed a distinct survey, for every thousand acres."[12] For this decision, Dunmore was severely reprimanded by Lord Dartmouth, the British Colonial Secretary, who wrote that:

> independent of the general impropriety of laying out lands within that tract until His Majesty's pleasure be finally known, it seems to me very doubtful whether provincial officers and soldiers are included in that proclamation, and therefore I trust that you will grant no patents for such locations or allow further locations to be made upon such claims until you have received further Orders from the King.[13]

On his return from the western campaign, Dunmore found another letter from Dartmouth awaiting him. This communication was even more emphatic and instructed Dunmore to make no grants "beyond the Limits of the Royal Proclamation of 1763" under any conditions whatsoever.[14] Then when the Colonial Office learned of Dunmore's expedition against the Indians, he was threatened with dire consequences for his action.[15] Not only had Dunmore acted without consulting Sir

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[10] Percy B. Cally, "Lord Dunmore and the Pennsylvania-Virginia Boundary Dispute," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, XXII (June, 1939), 97-109.

[11] "The Diary of Landon Carter," in the *William and Mary College Quarterly*, XIV (July, 1934), 183.

[12] Samuel Wharton, *Facts and Observations Respecting the Country Granted to his Majesty by the Six United Nations of Indians* (London, 1775), 52-53.

[13] Dartmouth to Dunmore, July 6, 1774; quoted in Isaac S. Harrell, *Loyalism in Virginia* (Philadelphia, 1926), 10.

[14] Dartmouth to Dunmore, October 5, 1774; in Samuel Hazard, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st series, I, 579-580; Samuel Wharton, *Plain Facts* (Philadelphia, 1781), 139.

[15] Dunmore to Dartmouth, December 24, 1774; in Thwaites and Kellogg, *Dunmore's War*, 366-370. Portions of this report not included in *Dunmore's War* can be found in Peter Force, ed., *American Archives*, 4th series, I, 1062-1063.

William Johnson, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Northern District, but was accused by Dartmouth of being personally interested in land speculation. Dunmore denied the accusation. Rather than violating British policy, the earl maintained that the Shawnee could have been pacified only by resorting to force; and "I think there is a greater probability that these scenes will never be renewed, than ever was before.[16] Furthermore," said the Governor, "no power on earth could restrain the Americans who do not conceive that Government has any right to forbid the settlement of unoccupied lands or to prevent the killing of Indians—their inveterate enemies whose stage of development was little removed from Brute Creation."[17] As no frame of government had been established for the western region which Virginians were settling despite the proclamation line, the Earl of Dunmore observed that the only alternative to a "Set of Democratic Governments of their own" was to extend the boundaries of Virginia so that the pioneers could be kept under the governmental authority of England.[18] Undoubtedly there was more than measure of truth in such a viewpoint. Seemingly, it was more realistic and more practical than the policies, or lack of them, which were pursued by the British government. But Dunmore, in view of his own personal application for a tract of 100,000 acres, hardly could have expected the Colonial Office to believe that he had no interest in land speculation. Nevertheless, he further defended his honor by stating that the "Philadelphia Papers, and I dare say other means, have been used to make it believed, that I acted only in conjunction with a parcel of Land Jobbers. . . . The Indian disturbances have . . . been wonderfully aiding to Mr. Penn's purpose, and he has not neglected them."[19] Without doubt, Dunmore's Pennsylvania adversaries represented his activities to the Colonial Office in the most odious light; yet the earl's self-characterization as a misunderstood patriot can hardly be accepted at face value.

Regardless of his motivations, Dunmore's direction of the campaign against the Shawnee was one of enlightened action. He was not interested in a war of extermination; and before

[16] Dunmore to Dartmouth, December 24, 1774; in Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., Dunmore's War, [illegible].
[17] Ibid., [illegible].
[18] Ibid., [illegible].
[19] Ibid., [illegible].

resorting to final measures, he did attempt to negotiate a peaceful settlement.[20] Furthermore, after the battle of Point Pleasant, the Royal Governor offered liberal peace terms. His prevention of a war of annihilation which Lewis' branch of the army wanted to pursue in Ohio visibly angered the Virginians.[21] Evidently this factor contributed to the accusation in later years that Dunmore had been guilty of treacherous conduct. But undoubtedly, his decision was wise. His object was to secure a lasting peace. What useful purpose would have been served in wreaking unnecessary vengence? After the Revolution began, Virginia agents, attended by representatives of the Continental Congress, pursued the governor's policy to its logical conclusion. A peace treaty was signed the following year at Fort Pitt.[22] Nevertheless, Dunmore's reputation has suffered at the hands of historians.

Thomas Perkins Abernethy pointed out that the last Royal Governor of Virginia could well afford to offer generous terms to the Shawnee. Abernethy reasoned that Dunmore had speculative interests in Kentucky, not in Ohio.[23] Other historians have also concluded that his actions were largely if not entirely determined by the desire for personal gain and/or that he was the tool of "land jobbers." For example, Isaac Harrell stated that Dunmore's War was fought to gratify the western aspirations of "would be landholders" who held unsurveyed claims.[24] Clarence W. Alvord states that there is no absolute proof for such a view but he strongly suspects a close connection between speculative aspirations and the campaign against the Shawnee.[25] In a similar vein, Randolph C. Downes interpreted the earl's conduct as a "complete surrender to land-hungry

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[20] For information concerning these negotiations see *American Archives*, 4th series, I, 871-876.

[21] According to the son of General Andrew Lewis, the chagrin of some of his father's troops was so intense that the general tripled the guard as a precautionary measure in order to prevent any possible violence directed toward the governor when he was in the process of negotiating peace terms with the Shawnee. Andrew Lewis to S. P. Campbell, Esq., n.d.; in William Maxwell, ed., *The Virginia Historical Register and Literary Advertiser* (6 vols., Richmond, 1848-1853), I, 32.

[22] Documents relating to the treaty at Pittsburgh in June, 1775 can be found in Reuben G. Thwaites and Louise P. Kellogg, eds., *Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1908), 25-127. See also the "Treaty between Virginia and the Indians at Fort Dunmore (Pittsburg), June, 1775," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XIV (July, 1906), 54-75.

[23] Abernethy, *Western Lands*, 114.

[24] Harrell, *Loyalism in Virginia*, 13.

[25] Alvord, *Mississippi Valley*, II, 193. Citing Alvord as her authority, C. L. Skinner comes to a similar conclusion. Constance L. Skinner, *Pioneers of the Old Southwest* (New Haven, 1921), 113.

frontiersmen and speculators."[26] Of course, Theodore Roosevelt had no words of condemnation for Dunmore. Ardent nationalist that he was, questions concerning the motives of Dunmore or the activities of land speculators were of minor significance in comparison to the tremendous surge it gave to western expansion. One can nearly picture an image in Roosevelt's mind of the last far western pioneer standing on a California shore looking sadly at the Pacific Ocean.[27]

It appears, however, that historians have been too severe in their negative appraisal of Dunmore's career. It can hardly be denied that John Murray had economic interests in the West or that "land hunger" was the most significant factor which motivated speculators and frontiersmen. But to picture the Earl of Dunmore as a greedy, grasping speculator who probably welcomed war for selfish economic reasons is by no means a complete picture of motivation. Documentary evidence suggests that Dunmore acted for a variety of reasons. Interest in land speculation was only one important factor.

Efforts to find a solution to western land and government problems virtually defied solution for blundering, inept or ill-informed British politicians. In opposing a short-sighted British policy, there was merit in Lord Dunmore's contention that westward expansion could not be prevented and that the extension of Virginia's authority was the only alternative to a "Set of Democratic Governments of their own."[28] Dartmouth, who wrote to Sir William Johnson that "I am at a loss to guess at the motives which led to the hostilities against the Shawnee,"[29] apparently could not appreciate the governor's position that his campaign against the Indians was designed to avert a more serious uprising against the advancing frontiersmen—a frontier advance which neither Dunmore, the British Govern-

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[26] Randolph C. Downes, "Dunmore's War: An Interpretation," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXI (December, 1934), 319.

[27] Other writers whose primary concern begins with the outbreak of revolution in Virginia ignore or minimize the significance of Dunmore's War. Their negative criticism of the governor's career is based primarily on his abortive attempts at suppressing revolutionary forces in Virginia. Little, if any, consideration is given to his activities in pre-Revolutionary years. See Charles R. Lingley, *The Transition from Colony to Commonwealth* (New York, 1910), 61-64 and passim.; Hamilton J. Eckenrode, *Revolution in Virginia* (Boston, 1916), 73-75 and passim.

[28] Dunmore to Dartmouth, December 24, 1774; in Thwaites and Kellogg, *Dunmore's War*, 272.

[29] Dartmouth to Sir William Johnson, February 1, 1775; in E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (11 vols., Albany, 1856-1860), VIII, 531.

ment, nor the Indians could turn aside. Indeed, his conduct of negotiations at Camp Charlotte, and his prevention of unnecessary bloodshed was well-considered statesmanship. Dunmore certainly was not guilty of perpetrating a needless war. Lyman Draper estimated that as many lives were lost on the frontier in the decade preceding Dunmore's campaign as were forfeited as a result of the war itself.[30]

In addition, Lord Dunmore was not unconscious of humanitarian considerations in hoping for an early pacification of the Shawnee. He was well aware that "Longknives" were guilty of committing atrocities as were the Indians. In a letter to Dartmouth, Dunmore stated his intention of trying to discover and prosecute renegade whites who shared a large portion of blame for the seemingly unending process of attack and retaliation.[31] Only the unreserved skeptic can accuse Dunmore of complete hypocrisy when on the eve of his departure for the West he wrote to Dartmouth that:

> . . . I expected a War with the Indians, since the Shawnees, Mingoes, and some of the Delawares, have fallen on our frontiers, killed, scalped and most cruelly murdered a great many, women and children . . . , but I hope in eight or ten days to march . . . over the Alleghany Mountains, and then . . . to the mouth of the Scioto, and if I can possibly fall upon these lower towns undiscovered I think I shall be able to put an end to this cruel war in which there is neither honor, pleasure, nor profit.[32]

Dunmore's campaign against the Shawnee was swift and decisive. For a short time, his popularity in Virginia reached unparalleled heights. On the return march from the West, the officers of his army passed a resolution praising their commander, "who, we are confident, underwent the great fatigue of this singular campaign from no other motive than the true interest of this country."[33] When he arrived in Williamsburg, Dunmore was presented with congratulatory addresses from the city,[34] the College of William and Mary[35] and from the governor's council.[36] Then in March, 1775, even the Virginia

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[30] Thwaites and Kellogg, *Dunmore's War*, 374n.
[31] Dunmore to Dartmouth, December 24, 1774; in *Ibid.*, 378-379.
[32] Dunmore to Dartmouth, August 14, 1774; in *Ibid.*, 149-150.
[33] Address at Fort Gower, November 5, 1774; in *American Archives*, I, 963-963.
[34] Address of the city of Williamsburg to Lord Dunmore, December 5, 1774; in *Ibid.*, I, 1013.
[35] The College of William and Mary to Lord Dunmore, December 5, 1774; in *Ibid.*, I, 1013.
[36] The Council of Virginia to Lord Dunmore, December 5, 1774; in *Ibid.*, 1043-1044.

Convention, assembled in opposition to imperial authority, resolved that:

> the most cordial thanks of the people of this colony are a tribute justly due our worthy Governour [sic], Lord Dunmore, for his truly noble, wise, and spirited conduct, on the late expedition against our Indian enemy; a conduct which at once evinces his Excellency's attention to the true interests of this colony, and a zeal in the executive department which no dangers can divert, or difficulties hinder, from achieving the most important services to the people who have the happiness to live under his administration.[37]

The last Royal Governor of Virginia "who during the campaign of 1774 shared its hardships with the privates, marching on foot and carrying his own knapsack"[38] richly deserved this acclaim. He had served Virginians well. Surely Dunmore deserves a far more favorable evaluation from historians than it has been his fortune to receive. Up to this point in his career as Governor of Virginia, the earl displayed a remarkable talent for statesmanship and foresight. Despite the fact that he disagreed with established imperial concerning western lands, his activities would suggest that he combined self-interest and colonial "rights" with a genuine desire to maintain the authority of George III. In urging the extension of Virginia's boundaries westward, Dunmore obviously recognized the inadvisability of the proposed Vandalia enterprise, and other attempts to resolve the western problem which conflicted with Virginia's charter rights. The Quebec Act may have been a piece of enlightened legislation in-so-far as the French Canadians were concerned. Yet the fact that Americans considered this piece of legislation as one of the Coercive Acts suggests that British statesmen would have done well had they embraced Dunmore's program—a program which would not have clashed so violently and inevitably with the hopes and aspirations of colonials. By no means does such a conclusion signify that Dunmore was a reformer with a theoretical program who strived to show the British government the error of its ways. Nevertheless, it is clear that from a variety of motivations, the policies which John Murray actively put into operation demon-

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[37] Resolution of the Virginia Convention, March 20, 1775; in *Ibid.*, II, 170. The Earl of Dunmore also received similar addresses from the city of Norfolk and from the inhabitants of Fincastle County. See *Ibid.*, 1019-1020 and *Ibid.*, II, 301-303.

[38] Thwaites and Kellogg, *Dunmore's War*, 426.

strated his recognition of fundamental issues which the authorities in London failed completely to grasp.

Fate, however, was not kind to the last Royal Governor of Virginia. Dunmore, the champion of colonial "rights" in pre-Revolutionary Virginia, was none the less a loyal subject of George III. When war came in 1775, his zeal in opposing revolutionary forces earned for him the burning hatred of his former supporters. On one occasion Dunmore exploded "that he had once fought for Virginians, and that by God he would let them see he could fight against them."[39] Never to be successful, the royalist forces under Dunmore were defeated by none other than General Andrew Lewis, the hero of Point Pleasant. Defeated, humiliated and without hope for victory, the earl left Virginia in July, 1776.

Now that Dunmore had earned the hatred of Virginians, all former acts and activities were viewed with suspicion. No longer was he to be hailed as the grand and glorious conqueror of the Shawnee. In the minds of many Virginians, Dunmore's War was now considered as a plot against the frontier militia—a conspiracy planned with diabolical cleverness. The earl's intentions had not been to pacify the Shawnee or pave the way for future settlement. Rather, the frontiersmen concluded that the Earl of Dunmore must have been secretly in collusion with the Shawnee. By isolating Andrew Lewis at Point Pleasant, Dunmore hoped for his destruction at the hands of Cornstalk. Even Lewis made a statement to this effect before he died in 1781.[40] These charges, however, were not confined to contemporaries. They were repeated with variations by a whole generation of "border" historians. Indeed, this viewpoint has been carried over into the twentieth century by "local" historians who have erroneously repeated the rationalization that the battle of Point Pleasant was the first battle of the American Revolution.

Even if Lord Dunmore had been guilty of treachery, the conclusion that the encounter at Point Pleasant was the first battle of the American Revolution is illogical enough—not to say absurd. Rarely, if ever, can the "devil" theory of historical

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[39] "Virginia Legislative Papers," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XIII (July, 1906), 62.

[40] "Shawn's Narrative," in *The West Virginia News* (Rosseverte, W. Va.), June 1, 1906, p. 3.

causation be substantiated. Aside from the evidence which depicts Dunmore as a far-sighted champion of colonial "rights," an accurate account of the expedition itself exonerates the earl from these wild accusations which were distorted in the heat and passion of war.

In essence the charge of treachery stems from the fact that Dunmore and Lewis did not rendezvous at the Ohio River. The governor's first instructions directed Lewis to proceed to Point Pleasant where the two branches of the army would converge.[41] A later communication, however, instructed Lewis to proceed to the mouth of the Little Kanawha instead of Point Pleasant. Lewis refused to comply and sent word to the earl that he could not alter his route.[42] Evidently this information did not reach Dunmore. When the Governor did not find Lewis at the Little Kanawha, he sent messengers south to locate Lewis with instructions for him to proceed to the mouth of the Big Hockhocking, about sixty miles north of Point Pleasant.[43] When Lewis arrived at Point Pleasant, he found Dunmore's message in a hollow tree and sent word to the earl that he could make no further advance until his rear guard arrived with supplies.[44] Then on October 8, 1774, two days before the battle, Lewis received more dispatches from Dunmore and replied that he would march northward to join his commander-in-chief as soon as possible.[45] Then Dunmore changed his plans. Rather than delay the progress of the expedition by awaiting the arrival of Lewis, the governor sent a dispatch instructing Lewis to cross the Ohio at Point Pleasant and march toward the Indian towns. The two wings of the army, converging at an angle, would rendezvous and proceed to attack the Shawnee villages.[46] Before this new plan of action could be put into operation, Cornstalk with a force of 800 to 1000 Indians attacked Lewis' army of 1100 frontiersmen. Dunmore's treachery then, consisted of failing to rendezvous with a subordinate who did not

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[41] Dunmore to Andrew Lewis, July 24, 1774; in Thwaites and Kellogg, *Dunmore's War*, 91-96. See also Dunmore to Lewis, July 12, 1774; in *Ibid.*, 86.

[42] Andrew Lewis to William Preston, September 8, 1774; in *Ibid.*, 191.

[43] "Fleming's Journal," October 6, 1774; in *Ibid.*, 285, 285n; Alexander Scott Withers, *Chronicles of Border Warfare* (Cincinnati, 1912), 167n, 168n. Edited by Reuben G. Thwaites.

[44] William Fleming to Adam Stephen, October 8, 1774; in Thwaites and Kellogg, *Dunmore's War*, 226-228.

[45] "Fleming's Journal," October 8, 1774; in *Ibid.*, 286; Thwaites, ed., *Wither's Chronicles*, 168n.

[46] William Christian to William Preston, October 15, 1774; in *Ibid.*, 283-284; William Preston to Patrick Henry, October 21, 1774; in *Ibid.*, 292-293; "Fleming's Journal," October 13-17, 1774; in *Ibid.*, 288-289.

comply with the instructions of his commander-in-chief. Had Lewis fulfilled the instructions of Dunmore, there would have been no battle at the confluence of the Great Kanawha and Ohio Rivers between a group of colonial frontiersmen and a band of Shawnee Indians.

Nevertheless, as has been mentioned before, Dunmore's reputation has suffered at the hands of historians. Alexander Scott Withers, in his famous volume, *Chronicles of Border Warfare,* reasoned that in 1774 Dunmore knew that revolution in the colonies was inevitable. Therefore he tried to seek the aid of the Indians in reducing Virginians to subjection. Thus he concluded that:

> the battle of Point Pleasant, virtually the first in the series of those brilliant achievements which burst the bonds of British tyranny; and the blood of Virginia, there nobly shed, was the first blood spilled in the sacred cause of American liberty.[47]

Writing in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* in 1902, a "local" historian, J. T. McAllister, was even more explicit. The encounter at Point Pleasant was the "first battle of the Revolution."[48] McAllister concluded that everyone in Virginia was aware as early as June, 1774 that the American Revolution was inevitable. By "aiding Lewis to overcome these foes" Dunmore would have performed an invaluable service to the cause of independence. But to "cripple him or have him exterminated" would have assured the suppression of the revolutionary movement in Virginia.[49] Yet, in the final analysis, McAllister conceded that "the evidence sustaining absolutely a charge of this kind is hard to produce."[50] Since such evidence is non-existent, McAllister had to resort to the process of fallacious reasoning and perversion of facts.[51]

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[47] Withers, *Chronicles of Border Warfare,* 177-178.

[48] J. T. McAllister, "The Battle of Point Pleasant," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography,* IX (April, 1902), 402.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., X (July, 1902), 81.

[51] Other works which contain nearly identical viewpoints are: John P. Hale, *Trans-Alleghany Pioneers* (Charleston, W. Va., 1886), 174-175, 185, 202-210; Livia S. Puffenbarger, *The Battle of Point Pleasant, A Battle of the Revolution* (Point Pleasant, W. Va., 1909), passim.; Samuel P. Hildreth, *Pioneer History* (Cincinnati, 1848), 89-94; Joseph A. Waddell, *Annals of Augusta County* (Richmond, 1886), 121-126, 147; Joseph Doddridge, *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars of the Western Parts of Virginia and Pennsylvania, from 1763-1783* (Albany, N. Y., 1876), 235-239; John J. Jacob, *A Biographical Sketch of the Life of the Late Captain Michael Cresap* (Cincinnati, 1866), 56-57, 62-64, 71-91. Still other writers are more cautious in their approach. They do not conclude that the battle of Point Pleasant was the first battle of the American Revolution but lend support to the charge that the earl was guilty of treacherous conduct—the basic framework of this fallacious and erroneous conclusion. See Charles Campbell, *History of the Colony and Ancient Dominion of Virginia* (Philadel-

Historical myths, however, die a slow death. On December 4, 1907 Senator Nathan Bay Scott of West Virginia introduced the following bill in the Senate of the United States:

> A bill to aid in the erection of a monument or memorial at Point Pleasant, W. Va., to commemorate the battle of the Revolution fought at that point between the colonial troops and Indians October 10, 1774.

The bill was approved by the Senate on February 21, 1908.[52] Thus was official sanction given, "but only obliquely" as historian Elizabeth Cometti phrased it, to the rationalization that the battle of Point Pleasant was the first encounter in the War for Independence[53]—a myth which persists among the people of the Trans-Alleghany region down to the present day.

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phia, 1860), 594; John L. Peyton, *History of Augusta County, Virginia* (Staunton, Va., 1882), 155-156; Samuel Kercheval, *A History of the Valley of Virginia* (Winchester, Va., 1833), 147, 157, 165-166, 187. Roy Bird Cook does not make his position clear. The battle of Point Pleasant "is by many regarded as the first battle of the revolution." Roy Bird Cook, *Washington's Western Lands* (Strasburg, Va., 1930), 26.

[52] S. R. 160, 60 *Cong., 1 Sess.*, 27, 251.

[53] Elizabeth Cometti to Richard O. Curry, letter to the writer, October 30, 1957.